



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Edinburgh Research Explorer

### Turbulent Stillness

**Citation for published version:**

Martin, C 2011, Turbulent Stillness: the politics of uncertainty and the undocumented migrant. in D Bissell & G Fuller (eds), *Stillness in a Mobile World*. International Library of Sociology, Routledge, pp. 192-208.

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Stillness in a Mobile World

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



## 12 Turbulent stillness

### The politics of uncertainty and the undocumented migrant

*Craig Martin*

#### Introduction: the stilled roar of modernity?

‘A still is a state of calm, a lull in the action’<sup>1</sup>

But, it begins again. We hear the twisted cacophony of the mangled crash barrier as the car veers off the motorway due to the unending quest for rapidity. In J. G. Ballard’s novel *Concrete Island* the lead character Robert Maitland ends up marooned in an abandoned wasteland at the side of an urban motorway.<sup>2</sup> Desperate to escape he attempts to hail passing drivers – like him they are blinkered in their desire for ceaseless acceleration. Maitland’s character (and Ballard’s oeuvre more generally) speaks of speed on the one hand and the frustrations at being locked-out of acceleration on the other. The motorway, in its earlier phase, as the emblem of modernity’s thirst for acceleration is a central character in Ballard’s narrative, it carves through an urban landscape formed out of the conjoined forces of speed and stillness: the former triumphant. Late modernity is awash with these collisions of tangled mobilities. Stillness butts up against the sheer force of movement, occasionally the quietude of this stillness calms the power of modernity at its most accelerated; at other times the moments of stillness are taken-up again by this force, torn from their momentary composure. To be sure, there is never a permanent balance.

In reflecting on the diverse registers of stillness the anthropologist Kathleen Stewart offers some important signals as to the relational imbrication of stillness and movement. For Stewart ‘a still life is a static filled with vibratory motion, or resonance. A quivering in the stability of a category or a trajectory, it gives the ordinary the charge of an unfolding.’<sup>3</sup> We can garner from this that stillness cannot be disentangled from movement – they are always immanent to one another, twinned as it were. The static image, be it a ‘still life’ in aesthetic terms or a stilled moment in phenomenological terms is always replete with becoming-movement, a latent potential or perhaps precarity. Stewart’s work on ordinary, everyday affects highlights the quotidian moments where the body weaves a narrative of shock, repulsion, joy, quietude, movement. The body in this case is a rejoinder that maps the variegated events of stillness and rapidity. Such observations are central to this text: for although there are clear divergences between the embodied notions of stillness and movement it is the conjoined *forces*<sup>4</sup> of stillness and movement

that exemplify mobility. Most revealingly this is seen with the fraught corporeal mobilities of undocumented migrants.

The corporeal and non-corporeal encounters between rapidity and stillness offer particular insights into the heightened and intense connections across the mobilities assemblage.<sup>5</sup> This is seen in the geographies of the air passenger who is screened at airport security,<sup>6</sup> the passenger who waits,<sup>7</sup> through to commodity mobilities, where shipping containers lie empty, awaiting transit.<sup>8</sup> Stillness can be claimed to hold within it the potential to become mobile, the latent possibility of activity; it has the tenor of 'incipient rich durations' as David Bissell describes it.<sup>9</sup> By contrast John Tomlinson asserts that stillness or slowness, can read as a form of escape where the notion of quietude is an excision from the pace of late modernity.<sup>10</sup> Whilst Tomlinson's discussion of stillness as a form of 'authentic' experience may be desirable for specific echelons of the cosmopolitan elite, it is manifestly clear that stillness can also be seen in less sanguine terms. Perhaps most significantly the immanent folding between stillness and accelerated modernity is displayed in the complex debates on migratory practices and refugee mobilities specifically. The trajectories of those vulnerable peoples 'locked-out' of global flows are replete with periods of extreme turbulence in the form of ceaseless movement that they have little control over, through to phases of stillness, 'chronic waiting'<sup>11</sup> and further uncertainty. In these scenarios undocumented migrants<sup>12</sup> have little choice as to when stillness will come, or concurrently when they can move. Subsumed within such arguments is an assemblage rich in the textures of identity, citizenship, politics and mobility. This chapter looks to feed-off of these by approaching the issue of stillness from the perspective of critical mobilities.

In June 2000 the bodies of 58 Chinese citizens were discovered in a lorry at the Port of Dover in the UK. It appeared that the deaths were as a result of the refrigeration equipment being switched off and the doors locked shut.<sup>13</sup> Almost identical to this story were the deaths in a shipping container of 54 Burmese undocumented migrants seeking economic security in Thailand, again due to lack of ventilation. The bodies were discovered after the driver of the truck stopped when the migrants banged on the container to alert him to the extreme conditions. As Ian Mackinnon notes, the macabre story illustrates 'the plight of Burmese migrants fleeing conflict and economic collapse in their homeland'.<sup>14</sup> This stark illustration foregrounds the complex and competing forces that produce such turmoil. For it is clear that these people seeking safety in the UK or the Thai mainland could only do so by paying out large sums of money to the smuggling gangs, but concomitantly such parallel networks of criminality operate due to the increases in border security. Väyrynen raises a key issue in terms of this contradictory logic: for illegal migration's

distinguishing feature is the legal status that is defined by the rules adopted by national governments and intergovernmental organizations. The illicit status of migrants also has consequences for the mechanisms of cross-border movement and the personal position of migrants. In other words, illegal migration cannot be separated either from the larger dynamics of the global economy nor the policies pursued by governments.<sup>15</sup>

As I argue, the designation of illegality forced onto these people creates an extended network of dependency on *actual* forms of illegality. Such instances of undocumented migration embody the disparate landscape of contemporary migratory practices, constructed out of a highly varied number of reasons, from employment, education and familial ties through to the seeking out of political refuge.<sup>16</sup> There is then a diversity of reasons as to why people move, for legitimated or un-legitimated reasons. The texture of migration as Arjun Appadurai notes is not a stable flow of individuals and groups that move at a steady pace, instead these trajectories are constituted by troubled, unstable mobilities that are punctuated by periods of uncertainty, disjuncture, stasis, but also hope, promise and imagination.<sup>17</sup> Although migration has its specific conditions of engagement, for Nikos Papastergiadis it can also be read on a wider level, where it may be thought of as a 'metaphor for the complex forces which are integral to the radical transformations of modernity'.<sup>18</sup> To an extent this is one of my aims.

In determining what might be called the parallel geographies of undocumented migratory mobilities the overriding assertion is that immanent to the speed of accelerated Modernity there exists stillness. This is of course apparent across the diverse forms of corporeal mobility, cosmopolitan and mundane tourist practices, to the extremes of people trafficking. Although manifestly aware of the political ramifications of these differing formations this text seeks to situate stillness within the combinatory forces of turbulence and uncertainty, facets that are most starkly promulgated by the heightened forms of instability that undocumented migration presents. Section one outlines the issue of rapidity as the basis for the wider implications of the stillness assemblage: it is argued that rapidity is premised on a highly controlled infrastructure of domination produced through an array of filters that mediate access to rapidity and by definition stillness. Central to my concerns in this section is the problematic of *locking-out*, whereby the non-legitimated figure of the undocumented migrant is dispossessed of the rights to both their movement and their stasis. Following this the next two sections consider the specificity of migratory mobilities in relation to the undocumented journey – this phase counts for the primacy of uncertainty, in the form of infiltrative practices. The combinatory forces that I describe above are utilized in order to situate the seeking-out of acceleration through a form of *locking-into* already extant trajectories. It is imperative to acknowledge that these processes of infiltration result in what I term turbulent stillness in section four: a purposefully paradoxical nomenclature that is intended to illustrate how stillness in undocumented migration is riven with uncertainty and instability. In doing so I look to the concept of turbulence to assert the ongoing dynamism of such trajectories that ultimately produce a politics of uncertainty. Further to this, the complexity of the ongoing processes of uncertainty are explored in the final section where I return to the condition of locking-out. In doing so I attempt to suggest that an extended network of locking-out operates via the construction of permanent border devices which instantiate a permanent space and state of suspension – holding the undocumented in place. In arguing this I propose a subtle reconfiguration of Giorgio Agamben's concept of the camp as a space of exception<sup>19</sup> in order to assert that the 'holding-still' of the undocumented

migrant represents a space of suspension where stillness is produced through the construction of permanent mechanisms to lock out.

### Rapidity and control

Appadurai's work on the various 'scapes' of late modernity, although widely disseminated, still proffers a valuable means of identifying the disjunctions of contemporary mobilities.<sup>20</sup> Finance capital, he maintains, moves at increasingly blinding speeds.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, mediascapes signal the instantaneous distribution of immaterial information across global space-time. As with the ethnoscapes of contemporary migration there are, however, differentials that problematize the assumed mobile global present. Tomlinson argues that the differential nature of speed necessitates a more protracted appreciation of what speed insinuates; it is both a relative term and one that connotes rapidity. However, for Tomlinson it is the latter which holds the most symbolic power for late modernity: 'From the perspective of cultural analysis, then, it is *rapid* speed, speed thought of as remarkable in its increase, that is the dominant meaning'[original emphasis].<sup>22</sup> Positing the move from the origins of mechanistic speed through to the present culture of immediacy, Tomlinson highlights certain expectations that access to the culture of effortless mobility is an inalienable right for the contemporary citizen. To be sure, the dreamed of frictionless, saponaceous distribution of the cosmopolitan tourist body across the globe is, as John Urry notes, akin to a 'citizenship of flow'.<sup>23</sup>

Tomlinson's reading of rapidity accentuates a number of different registers of affect, including the increasing proliferation of mass-media images, but most tellingly for the question of rapidity is the impact of militarized speed. Conceivably this 'unruly' speed marks out a space of rupture, violence and turmoil, where the pursuit of rapid speed results in a culture of exclusion and destructive logic. Tomlinson situates this 'ethic' within the excessive desires of the Italian Futurists, noting their thirst for an engagement with speed that was intended to embolden the break with the past. In advocating increased acceleration the Futurists, Tomlinson argues, sought speed by fetishising three central aspects: machinic sensuality; danger; and speed as a form of violence.<sup>24</sup> Focusing on the latter, it is with war that the direct relationship between violence and rapidity is most obviously manifested. Following Paul Virilio, Tomlinson argues that 'speed is the essence of war',<sup>25</sup> both in terms of economic power and through strategic power to move troops and munitions. It is with Virilio's work that the relationship between speed, war and violence is perhaps most radically analysed. Virilio insists that the commercial and quotidian aspects of rapidity are a result of the military-technological development of spatio-temporal control.<sup>26</sup>

This rapid accelerative culture operates through the construction of mediatory filters that function by facilitating movement of people and things through infrastructural domination. Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin have convincingly reasoned that rapidity in the form of global flows are produced via 'tunnel effects' – these are transit conduits connected at a variety of hubs (major seaports, teleports, railway stations, e-commerce hubs etc.) where adjustment occurs, be it

acceleration or deceleration. The requirement, according to these authors, is that the switch between tunnels is 'as seamless an experience as possible'.<sup>27</sup> It is decisive to recognize that as the social realm has become more dynamic and complex so too have these mechanisms that control and filter this rapidity. It is likewise critical to appreciate that the mechanisms and exclusionary divides that facilitate this acceleration of the physical world are the very ones that regulate it, curtailing movement and expurgating those people and things deemed illegitimate. For instance rapidity is produced and distributed through the material and immaterial construction of fortified space, a space that may look evermore fluid and liquid, but which is decidedly concrete in both architectural presence and ideological exclusion. The *regulation* of rapidity is at the root of commercial and political power. Simultaneously these fortified spaces of regulation that masquerade as conduits of saponaceous mobilities for legitimated individuals and things serve a dual purpose of stymieing the access to movement for the illegitimate – they produce stillness.

According to Virilio the structure of the urban realm, for example, is governed through the means to filter and check movement, seen through the variety of historical and contemporary 'toll systems'.<sup>28</sup> At such sites of ordering and filtering speed is maintained only for those individuals and things that have been sanctioned. Furthermore, the city is a moment or a check on the tempo of these channels of rapidity: a 'stopover' as Virilio calls it.<sup>29</sup> The spaces that typify the edges of the city, be they borders or shantytowns, the 'swampy, unhealthy beaches',<sup>30</sup> are there as a means of filtering movement in terms of social stratification. Such spatial forms act as controls, as 'brakes'<sup>31</sup> against through-flow. Moreover the strategies of filters and checks that provide a brake and curtail movement are extended beyond urban space into the larger-scale spaces of global migration through the 'organisational techniques able to control fairly vast spaces'.<sup>32</sup>

The notion of filtration as a regulatory mechanism can also be extended to the forms of transit that mediate rapid corporeal mobilities. Architectural theorist Lieven de Cauter has developed the concept of 'capsularization' as a means to determine how the increasing acceleration of the hyper mobilized world necessitates in-built protection for the human body. The role of such capsules is central to the protective cocooning of the body at these rapid speeds, but also to the constitution of networked mobilities. He states: 'I propose capsule here as the most general concept for every closed-off and plugged-in entity, which as a sum makes the networks what they are.'<sup>33</sup> Similarly without such modes of protection the increasing rapidity of Modernity would not have been possible: 'the more physical and informational speed increases, the more man (sic) will need capsules.'<sup>34</sup> Ultimately however, little is made in de Cauter's argument of those people who are filtered or *locked-out* of this protective regime. They cannot access the stilled moments of respite from rapidity that these capsules provide to the legitimated.

### Undocumented migratory mobilities and the struggle to move

Filtration, then, mediates rapidity and stillness across a multiplicity of thresholds; the mechanisms that produce and distribute rapidity operate via the combination of

conduits and capsules as alluded to above. The critical question is that of *access*. To be sure, social stratification, according to Zygmunt Bauman, does not disappear in the global, mobile present. Instead the divergences between legitimated and unlegitimated peoples become further stratified in the geopolitics of mobility through access to rapidity but also the potential for stillness. Bauman argues that the right to move ‘lays bare the fact that it is now the “access to global mobility” which has been raised to the topmost rank among the stratifying factors.’<sup>35</sup> However, as I argue below it is not only the right to move that is the vital factor, but perhaps more potently the right to stillness. Concerning the cosmopolitan mobilities of the tourist Bauman insists that their mobility is cushioned by an abundance of safe, ‘well marked escape routes’<sup>36</sup> that cocoon the tourist with a form of protective cushioning, that is both physical and emotional. These filters are tantamount to the potential for stillness, for respite from rapidity. By contrast, when speaking of the undocumented it is clear that these escape routes are blocked, the opportunity of stillness-as-calm denied to them – they are locked out. Just as there are different forms of rapidity there are qualitatively diverse forms of stillness.

In the struggle for the right to move a new politics of citizenship emerges whereby the question of cultural identity is further complexified by access to quietude.<sup>37</sup> Traditional conceptions of migration become problematized by these changes in global migrant mobilities. No longer are the push and pull factors that represented the classic conceptions of migration enough. As Tim Cresswell discusses, there is the critical distinction between the choice to move, the forced nature of certain forms of migration and the rights to stillness.<sup>38</sup> Lifestyle migration for instance illustrates the desire to leave one’s locale in the search for a more ‘authentic’ life,<sup>39</sup> by contrast the compulsion to depart from home due to political turmoil is decidedly more intense. On a global scale forced migration, for example, is said to account for between 100–200 million people.<sup>40</sup> The sheer scale of this is suggestive of the complex array of reasons for undocumented migration. In particular, as suggested above, the patterns of movement are now determined by the relationship between motive force and the borders that filter this. Papastergiadis argues that there are significant shifts in the patterns of contemporary migration, resulting in a situation where the questions of origin and destination no longer account for the sole perceptions of migration.<sup>41</sup> Castles also suggests that migration (forced in particular) is a symptom of shifts in global social transformations that reside at both the point of origin and the point of arrival.<sup>42</sup> However this pointillism is rather limiting, for the socio-spatial complexity of these sites of departure and arrival are critical to experiences of undocumented migrants, as is the journey itself.

### **Journeying: seeking out acceleration**

The journey represents a critical factor in the migratory processes of the undocumented: for it is with the journey that the colliding forces of rapidity and stillness are at their most fraught. The voyage as described by Papastergiadis may account for both the ongoing precarity of the migrant experience in the host country but it also foregrounds the critical importance of the journey as a series of attempts to

*lock-into* rapidity as well as the search for moments of respite. He argues that a focus on the voyage

would enable us to shift the discourse on migration from merely an explanation of either the external causes or the attribution of motivation to an examination of the complex relationships and perceptual shifts that are being formed through the experience of movement.<sup>43</sup>

To do so has to entail an engagement with the interacting forces of the journey itself, including those periods of tumult and those moments of rest, be they short or prolonged. These produce a politics of uncertainty, as will be articulated shortly.

Specifically, the experience of movement for the undocumented migrant is formed by an assemblage of competing forces. Above all, there are qualitative differences in *how* mobility is experienced across these conditions. Cresswell's recent identification of six potential conditions of mobility highlights above all the dynamical foldings between rapidity and stillness. As he states, 'mobility is a resource that is differentially accessed. One person's speed is another person's slowness.'<sup>44</sup> The processes of social stratification through mobility mean that speed is clearly a differentiated condition, where on the one hand for the undocumented migrant acceleration can be read as a positive factor that enables them to reach their destination, but the conditions of movement – the trajectory – may also mean that the tumult of passage is so extreme that the need for rest becomes evermore struggled for. Stillness in this situation, like acceleration, is a contested notion that rests, once more, on the roles of access and choice. Unlike the documented migrant or tourist who possess the means to choose when to remain in place, rest is not always afforded to the undocumented migrant.

The harshest examples of undocumented migratory practices involve people smuggling and human trafficking. It is estimated that one UK-based smuggling network smuggled some 1,800 people into Europe over a two-month period.<sup>45</sup> Whilst the figures are instructive, the specific methods of smuggling are decisive for this paper. This gang utilized various agents, including the bribery of ship captains, to smuggle Afghans through 'Iran and Turkey, by sea to Greece and then, hidden in the backs of freight lorries, across Europe to Britain'.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, during periods at sea wholly inappropriate small fishing vessels are often the only means to smuggle groups of undocumented migrants. In the journey from western Africa to the Canary Islands (a common migratory route) it is typical for migrants to travel in small wooden craft for a period of up to ten days.<sup>47</sup> Such instances of the migratory journey produce a number of critical factors for the present study. The various methods of transit highlight the shifting speeds, but also the specific mechanisms of infiltration. In order to subvert the securitizing gaze of border agencies smuggler networks utilize modes of transit that remain outside of normative means of corporeal mobility i.e., the backs or undersides of lorries.<sup>48</sup>

These trajectories evoke the combinatory forces of undocumented migrant mobilities. In order to access forms of rapidity the smuggling gangs could be said to utilize a type of parasitic harnessing, where the networks of global commodity



movement are infiltrated due to both the efficiencies but also the comparative opportunities for stowing away that these offer. The experiences of those individuals forced to travel in the backs or undersides of freight lorries speak of a radically different experience to traditional networks of corporeal mobilities – in this scenario they are locked *into* the tumult of rapidity. For the undocumented migrant the intensity of affect will be far greater than the documented migrant or tourist who is afforded certain forms of comfort as part of their capsularized mode of transit, or for that matter the means to opt out.<sup>49</sup> As such one has to be cognizant of the processes of being simultaneously locked-into and locked-out of rapidity and stillness, notions that I turn to in the next two sections.

### Turbulent stillness

On Tuesday 4 December 2001, 13 Kurds were ushered into a sealed shipping container at Port of Zeebrugge in Belgium by a people smuggling gang. Having made their way through Europe via different routes the group had each paid approximately £5,000 to travel on to the United Kingdom. As Paul Kelso observes these gangs ‘promise the credulous that they can beat the defences, at a price’.<sup>50</sup> Their story bears resemblance to the many individuals forced into stowing away in such spaces either through their own means or more typically via smuggling gangs. Such infiltrative practices speak of the methods of surreptitious passage that desperation necessitates, but it also highlights in rather more abstract terms the processes of locking-into already extant mobilities, in this case commodity distribution networks. However, as I argue below these practices are riven with forms of turbulence – there is *ongoing uncertainty* in both the journey itself, as demonstrated by the presence of securitization and bordering practices, but also the precarity in the eventual host nation. Stillness in these situations is divested of its cosmopolitan connotations of respite and calm: for these people are locked-into a violent trajectory where the apparently stilled space of the lorry or container is a form of capsularization, but one in which the protective functioning of the capsule is manifestly absent. Perhaps more readily this is stillness as incarceration. The body remains still to circumvent detection but the turbulence of the journey itself means that the comparative stillness of the body in motion is negligible. Clearly there are always perceptible moments of stillness, however, the stilled body of the encapsulated undocumented migrant is not held in place by the cocooning that de Cauter describes: rather, the sheer intensity of these travel conditions inflicts a form of violence on the stilled body of the migrant in movement – what might be termed *turbulent stillness*.

The fate of the 13 Kurds who boarded the container highlights this very notion of a turbulent, violent stillness: nine of the group were to die through suffocation. Kelso describes how the manifest inefficiencies of the distribution system led to a series of fatal errors whereby the journey from Zeebrugge to the Port of Dover that was scheduled to take eight hours took five days. The container in which the group was stowed was incorrectly picked from the container stacks at Zeebrugge and was loaded onto a ship bound for the Port of Waterford in Ireland instead of Dover.<sup>51</sup> On arrival at Waterford the automated stack system in operation meant that the cries

for help remained unheard. Again, there was a systemic failure: the container in which the group was stowed was scheduled to be loaded onto a lorry, but once more the wrong container was loaded. It was only on Saturday 8 December, some five days later that the group were eventually discovered having been heard banging for help by the correct lorry driver. This chilling example exemplifies how the body of the migrant is locked-into a turbulent experience of stillness, both in terms of the excessive affect of the journey but more pointedly the periods of stillness or incarceration. Although referring to a form of postmodern 'fidget', Bauman argues that it is increasingly difficult to remain still: 'The idea of the "state of rest", of immobility, makes sense only in a world that stays still or could be taken for such; in a place with solid walls, fixed roads and signposts steady enough to have time to rust. One cannot stay put in moving sands.'<sup>52</sup> So, whilst the idea of stillness being turbulent may at first appear a contradictory misnomer I argue that the journeys embarked upon by undocumented migrants are often formed by a process of *stillness-in-tumult*. Whilst it is clear that all forms of corporeal travel are performed through such foldings of the static body into vehicular movement, crucially, as articulated above, the difference lies at the intersection between comfort and stillness, or lack thereof. Such experiences highlight how stillness can never be separated from the violence of mobility, i.e. there is always ongoing uncertainty and instability.

Tellingly the notion of turbulence on a theoretical level offers the means to conceptualize the relationship between turbulent mobilities and the stilled, passive body of the undocumented migrant as being locked-into forms of instability. As turbulence and complexity theory more generally elicits, all natural and social systems are inherently temporary and subject to change. Likewise, these journeys are part of an ongoing passage of uncertainty. For Papastergiadis turbulence as a form of dynamical change highlights the increasing complexity in patterns of global migration, in particular theories of turbulence and complexity illuminate the unpredictability of contemporary society and by default migration: 'The turbulence of modern migration has destabilized the routes of movement and created uncertainty about the possibilities of settlement.'<sup>53</sup> Here we can see that turbulence reflects the transformative nature of migration on a global level.

If we move from this scale to that of the journey we can also begin to understand how stillness is inherent to the very notion of turbulence, and vice versa. Manuel De Landa's work on turbulence has proved insightful in advocating the analogical translation of this theory from the physical sciences onto social systems, allowing us to appreciate that all systems are dynamic and thus unpredictable and uncertain.<sup>54</sup> Turbulence, in common parlance, would be read as a form of unrest or disorder. Within social structures such conceptions of turbulence account for concerns over the loss of social cohesion, the fixity of geographical boundaries or more generally the lack of ability to control change.<sup>55</sup> In a move that speaks of classical science it is often argued that these external forces can be controlled. However as De Landa observes, whilst turbulence has been seen as something to tame and control, primarily through technological and military means,<sup>56</sup> more recent interest in the concept of turbulence reflects the dynamism of creative change and the importance of unpredictability for understanding natural and social processes as ongoing and

relational.<sup>57</sup> It is necessary to speak of this dynamism in terms of *instability* above all else, where the indeterminacy of the interactional forces of natural systems lead to moments of disorder, but critically there is also the potential for order to emerge out of this disorder.<sup>58</sup> Nigel Thrift asserts that it is the *interactional* processes that are key to understanding complexity as relational.<sup>59</sup> Urry furthers this by insisting upon the almost *precarious* balance between order and disorder in complex systems: 'Order and chaos are in a kind of balance where the components are neither fully locked into place but yet do not fully dissolve into anarchy.'<sup>60</sup> Although it is imperative to appreciate the metaphorical translation, for the present discussion we can begin to see how the tumult of movement can never be separated from stillness, but rather they are inscribed in one another through a process of ongoing instability. The stilled body will *always* be subject to tumult (akin to Kathleen Stewart's 'vibratory motion') and likewise the turbulence of this movement will to varying degrees be stilled at points, only to be forced into tumult once more. It is a question of transformation as Sanford Kwinter notes, however, where this is read as a form of creative change, for the undocumented migrant transformation speaks more readily of a politics of uncertainty.<sup>61</sup>

Michel Serres goes further than many scholars in articulating the paradoxical nature of how we understand turbulence as multiplicity. It is not, he states, simply disorderly, but rather turbulence in the natural world produces new forms of order: order can emerge out of disorder.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, in *The Birth of Physics* Serres bases his arguments on turbulence and chaos on Lucretius' poem *On the Nature of Things*. From this he reads turbulence as both *turba* and *turbo*. The former, he argues, 'designates a multitude, a large population, confusion and tumult. It is disorder'.<sup>63</sup> By contrast, *turbo* refers to a vortex, a 'round form in movement like a spinning top, a turning cone or vortical spiral. This is no longer disorder, even if the whirl is of wind, of water or of storms.'<sup>64</sup> It is the fine line, Serres argues, between the two that is at the origin of all things.<sup>65</sup> Crucially for my argument concerning stillness and movement, there is a form of meta-stability between the two, a *temporary* balance, as Urry describes. There is then an oscillation that shuttles back and forward – subject to change. This question of oscillation is explored by Serres in an example that demonstrates precisely the relationship between stability and instability, or stillness and movement. The undocumented migrant is literally caught up in this middle ground. Taking Plato's example of the child's spinning top from *The Republic*, Serres interrogates the apparent paradox between stability and instability in the movement of the top. This simple device is at once in movement, teetering on its axes, but perceptibly stable, the pinnacle appearing still: its stillness provided by its momentum. 'It is in movement' Serres articulates, 'and at rest, it runs yet does not move, it rocks and is stable.'<sup>66</sup> We have to appreciate, Serres insists, how variation comes from invariance, where there is a temporary meta-stability between the stability of movement and the precarity of the leaning top. One becomes the other to the extent where it is impossible to distinguish them: 'Is it stable? Yes. Is it unstable? Yes, again.'<sup>67</sup> Prigogine and Stengers describe this dynamical system where '*turba* becomes *turbo*' and 'a strange tumult reigns, the complete opposite of indifferent disorder'.<sup>68</sup>

Although these seemingly detached models of turbulence are distanced from the concrete horrors of examples like the deaths at Waterford, such renderings do, however, provide a productive ground on which to think through stillness as always turbulent; there is never pure inactivity, but rather forms of momentary meta-stability, but then fluctuation: they always begin again. For non-legitimated peoples the politics of turbulence is an ever-present reminder of the ongoing notions of uncertainty and precarity. Ben Anderson and John Wylie provide an important vista for thinking through a potential politics of uncertainty or turbulence, arguing that often the mundanity of the everyday appears removed from the whirl of the turbulent. Instead they suggest that ‘perhaps it [turbulence] is better suited to evoking relations of antagonism or contestation that constitute the political.’<sup>69</sup> Given the politics of uncertainty as described above, the notion of contestation offers a critical lens for identifying just how precarious the undocumented migrant experience remains – for the journey as outlined here remains only a momentary instant in the trajectory. As articulated below there are further sites where the struggle to move is confronted by endeavours to challenge the conceptual elicitation of impermanency by enforcing permanent suspension or exclusion.

### Holding-still as the ‘space of suspension’

The metaphorical device of the lock as utilized throughout this text is intended to demonstrate the notion of the ongoing bifurcations between permanency and impermanency – it can be locked or unlocked, secured or unsecured. Likewise the foldings between rapidity and stillness are established. In the preceding section I argued that the migrant journey is one of teetering instability where the stillness of movement is locked-into a form of violent uncertainty. Before this it was noted that the filtering devices which power-up rapidity purposefully expunge un-legitimated peoples and things through a process of locking-out. The undocumented migrant’s journey is one that is concurrently locked-into and locked-out of rapidity and stillness. The journey is awash with uncertainties; there is never the pleasure of the stilled moment, but rather the unwanted expectation of ongoing precarity. As complexity theory articulates there is constant *ongoingness* – from this perspective it could be argued that this is the case for all forms of mobility, be it undocumented or not. However, the politics of uncertainty pervades the undocumented migrant experience to an exponential extent, for theirs is an unremitting journey of uncertainty. Stillness, in these experiences is laden with turbulence in both its conceptual and quotidian registers. To be sure, they are locked-into the turbulence of uncertainty that is the parasitic journey because they are locked-out of regularized mobilities. We have to situate this notion of being locked-into with its constitutive Other, that of being locked-out of. Both journey and lock speak of ongoingness. In the journey the struggle for rapidity is encased in a realm of turbulent stillness, but as the earlier examples attest to, this is by no means the end point of the journey – there is ongoing turbulence. Angelique Chrisafis describes the journey of Naseer, a 15-year-old Afghan teenager whom she meets at a migrant squatter camp at Calais in northern France. After travelling for over a year through Iran, Turkey, Greece and Italy he

journeyed through France by train only to be ‘slammed up against an unexpected hurdle’.<sup>70</sup> The hurdle in question being both the English Channel and the border authorities at Calais. The forced stillness that such a situation denotes speaks once more of stillness as a form of filtration – this time in the production of stillness through the enforced holding-in-place of bordering strategies.

The politics of uncertainty that the capsularized journey of turbulent stillness produces is extended beyond the spatial confines of the shipping container for example, and into the temporal production of stillness through the border. A further means then of conceiving the place of stillness in the politics of undocumented migration is through the withdrawal of movement; where the right to move is withheld by enforced forms of stillness. Critical to this argument is the determination to *permanently* withdraw movement through the construction of material and immaterial filters. This stands in contrast to the temporality of ongoing change that turbulence theory makes clear. These forms of holding-still can initially be read through Craig Jeffrey’s work on the various expressions of waiting or periods of stillness, in particular with regard to his concept of ‘chronic waiting’.<sup>71</sup> For Jeffrey the chronic condition of waiting is exemplified by the lack of ability to escape various forms of oppression – instead, enforced waiting (or what I term here holding-still) is a condition where the freedom to move, like the freedom to remain still, is only available to legitimated peoples. Chronic waiting effects numerous excluded individuals and groups, from those seeking employment and forced to reside in a state of indetermination, through to those dominated by emergent forms of global control – for Jeffrey, the most visible mechanism of this form of chronic waiting on a global level is Giorgio Agamben’s concept of ‘the camp’.<sup>72</sup>

With the latter we are privy to the spatial determination of enforced stillness, where the filtering of speed that mediates rapidity, as we saw earlier, serves a parallel function when stillness becomes a form of enforced waiting as locking-out, or suspension as ‘bare life’, to use Agamben’s phrase.<sup>73</sup> Agamben’s work on the concepts of ‘bare life’, the ‘state of exception’ and ‘the camp’ have become powerful tools for considering the contemporary political milieu, most significantly on the so-called war on terror, but as I suggest here it may also be used to consider the *space of suspension* as an attempt to produce a permanent means to hold undocumented migration in place. Agamben argues that the state of exception emerges when a sovereign power imposes a doctrine of emergency powers as a result of political turmoil. Critically, however, the supposedly *temporary* state that exception implies, becomes *permanent* in the contemporary realm: indeed Agamben notes that

this transformation of a provisional and exceptional measure into a technique of government threatens radically to alter – in fact, has already palpably altered – the structure and meaning of the traditional distinction between constitutional forms.<sup>74</sup>

Such techniques of control are central to the enforcement of a state of exception, and Agamben argues that the materialization of this is ‘the camp’, or what he also terms the *space of exception*. The camp, he insists, is the ‘permanent spatial arrangement’

of the initially temporary state of exception.<sup>75</sup> The spatiality of the camp has been recognized by a number of political geographers working on this notion of the space of exception, and in particular Derek Gregory points out how

Agamben argues that the space of exception is typically produced through the declaration of a state of emergency that becomes the ground through which sovereign power constitutes and extends itself.<sup>76</sup>

Indeed, central to my own argument concerning the forms of holding-still is the construction of a space where holding-still is enforced via permanent material and immaterial boundaries. The 'ground' where this occurs has been already mooted in relation to techniques of filtration, but more pointedly the border (as Agamben himself notes)<sup>77</sup> is part of the *extended* space of permanent exception for the undocumented migrant. According to van Houtum *et al.* we find that the change in conception of a liquefied late modernity has produced different forms of bordering practices, rather than simply the border itself. Instead of the static notion of the container-border there are now 'complex and varied patterns of both implicit and explicit bordering and ordering practices'.<sup>78</sup> These practices can take a variety of forms other than the physical border – notably modes of location, tracking and surveillance, textual locatability in the form of ID cards, or more archaic devices such as the passport.<sup>79</sup>

Nevertheless, the border is still a space of material division, one that could be read as the space where the undocumented migrant is held in place spatially and *temporally*, locked-out of their mobility and suspended in a no-man's-land of chronic waiting. Paul Kenyon describes such a space of suspension, a house on the outskirts of Calais in northern France where a group of some 30 Africans have been forced to seek shelter in their desperate attempts to reach the UK.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps more tellingly for the concept of a space of suspension, other larger migrant camps close to the Port of Calais bear striking similarities to Agamben's description of the camp as a 'space in which bare life and the juridical rule enter into a threshold of indistinction'.<sup>81</sup> Given this notion of indistinction it is evident that the spatio-temporal suspension which the border generates functions in part through the attempts to lock undocumented migrants out of rapidity. This produces a state of permanent suspension where the precarity of bare life is enforced. Chrisafis discusses 'The Jungle', a tent city in Calais housing some 800 undocumented migrants, as being crammed with makeshift tents, constructed out of plastic sheeting and cardboard.<sup>82</sup> These squalid environs, located in sand dunes close to the main ferry terminal, are populated with a diverse range of economic migrants and refugees all seeking some form of surety in the United Kingdom. Typical periods of indeterminacy in these camps can be as long as ten to twelve months.<sup>83</sup> The Jungle and the earlier example of the Sangatte camp<sup>84</sup> (a Red Cross shelter designed to help undocumented migrants in the same area) typify the spaces of suspension that pervade the migratory experience. Stillness in these situations is a form of enforced suspension from movement where the potential of escape to the UK only comes with further attempts to stowaway on the underside of lorries or 'hiding in tankers to carry toxic chemicals'.<sup>85</sup> Having been locked-out of rapidity through the construction of permanent barriers to movement,

locking-into the violent mobilities of surreptitious passage remains the only option in this ongoing journey of uncertainty.

### Conclusion: it begins again

The closure of narrative that one expects at the end of a journey for legitimated travellers comes with some form of respite, a stilling where the lull in action is a welcome endpoint. The turbulent trajectory of the undocumented does not end with life in 'The Jungle' or other such sites; there is not the calmed stillness of settlement and belonging. Rather, those who manage to lash themselves onto the underside of a lorry or are installed in a shipping container having paid exorbitant sums to smuggling gangs once more enter an extended network of fear (and potentially optimism) that projects backwards and forwards. Back to the lives that have been left, to families who paid for the search for safety,<sup>86</sup> and forward to the uncertainties of political asylum or refugee status, which in itself is without guarantee.<sup>87</sup> The qualitative experience of stillness is wholly dependent on the differing categorizations of the individual. For the undocumented migrant questions of stillness are caught-up within a complex regime of spatial and temporal experiences. Space is not, as Virilio asserts, diminished in the age of immediacy,<sup>88</sup> instead the spatial *and* temporal registers of stillness are caught-up within a tangled collision of competing ideologies and desires. Stillness in the wider sense does not attest to a utopian state of rest or a zenith of solitude, but rather is immersed in the divergences that typify contemporary mobility. Far from the expectant periods of quietude that might characterize the moments of stillness for the legitimated migrant body, the ongoing forces of the undocumented migrant experience are subsumed within a regime of instabilities and precarity. Most tellingly the notion of instability is demonstrated through the conceptual potential of turbulence to reinforce the ongoing and conjoined forces of both rapidity and stillness. The trajectory of the undocumented migrant journey exemplifies this folding between the two – in the stilled environment of the shipping container there is the immanent presence of turbulence, of an ongoing instability where temporary stillness is surrounded by violent movement. Such impermanency can be compared to the state-sponsored mechanisms that attempt to enforce *permanent* spaces of suspension where the migrant is held in place, in this case through Agamben's notion of the border-camp. By highlighting the relationship between permanency and impermanency it is possible to signal the competing logics of rapidity and stillness as articulated by the politics of migration. If, as Tomlinson and Virilio suggest, late modernity is the age of immediacy, of the wilful desire for rapidity, then we also have to be cognizant of the parallel presence of stillness as the holding-still of certain peoples in spaces of suspension. Likewise, it is critical to acknowledge how the role of the migrant journey, as opposed to the push and pull factors, can further delineate the foldings of rapidity and stillness through and across one another. Such journeys undertaken by undocumented migrants demand specific practices of harnessing and locking-into rapidity for the purposes of seeking out surety, but simultaneously the politics of global control permanently lock these peoples out of their rights to rapidity.

## Notes

- 1 K. Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007, p. 18.
- 2 J. G. Ballard, *Concrete Island*. London: Vintage, 1994.
- 3 Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, p. 19.
- 4 The use of this term is intended to reflect the Deleuzian conception of force, where there is not a straightforward reference to an act of aggression or power, but rather an understanding of force as an agent of ongoing change, where shifts in the relations between different forces occur through the very processes of interaction. See P. Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*. London: Routledge, 2000, p. 52.
- 5 I utilize the conceptual armature of the 'mobilities assemblage' in this text. An assemblage emphasizes the overlapping, mottled leaves of mobility, highlighting the fact that rapidity alone does not account for the experience of corporeal movement. On the relationship to mobility see M. Salter, 'Introduction: airport assemblage', in M. Salter (ed.) *Politics at the Airport*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008, p. xiii.
- 6 P. Adey, 'Surveillance at the airport: surveilling mobility/mobilising surveillance', *Environment and Planning A*, 2004, vol. 36, no. 8, 1365–80.
- 7 D. Bissell, 'Animating suspension: waiting for mobilities', *Mobilities*, 2007, vol. 2, no. 2, 277–98.
- 8 C. Martin, field notes, Thamesport, United Kingdom, 29 March, 2007.
- 9 Bissell, 'Animating suspension', p. 279.
- 10 J. Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed: The Coming of Immediacy*. London: Sage, 2007, pp. 146–59.
- 11 C. Jeffrey, 'Waiting', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2008, vol. 26, no. 6, 954–58.
- 12 In this paper I use the term 'undocumented migration' to speak for the various practices that constitute the contemporary mobilities of those people forced into 'illegality'. In doing so, I resist the use of illegal or irregular, descriptions that suggest abnormality, rather than an enforced designation of legal status.
- 13 See W. Hoge, 'Bodies of 58 Asians in Dover: an 'evil trade in people'', *The New York Times*, 20 June, 2000, online available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/20/world/bodies-of-58-asians-in-dover-an-evil-trade-in-people.html?pagewanted=1> (accessed 5 January 2006).
- 14 I. Mackinnon, '54 Burmese migrants suffocate in packed lorry', *The Guardian*, 11 April, 2008, 16.
- 15 R. Väyrynen, *Illegal Immigration, Human Trafficking, and Organized Crime (Discussion Paper No. 2003/72)*. Helsinki: United Nations University, 2003, p. 3.
- 16 See A. Geddes, 'Chronicle of a crisis foretold: the politics of irregular migration, human trafficking and people smuggling in the UK', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 2005, vol. 7, no. 3, 326.
- 17 A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 33.
- 18 N. Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000, p. 2.
- 19 G. Agamben, *State of Exception*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- 20 Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.
- 21 It is evident, however, that the rapid movement of global capital has been stymied by the recent economic turmoil in global markets.
- 22 Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed*, p. 2.
- 23 J. Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*. London: Routledge, 2000, p. 167. For further discussion of the cosmopolitan body see J. Germann Molz, 'Cosmopolitan bodies: fit to travel and travelling to fit', *Body and Society*, 2006, vol. 12, no. 3, 1–21.



- 24 Tomlinson, *The Culture of Speed*, p. 47.
- 25 Ibid. p. 57.
- 26 P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*. New York: Semiotext(e), 2006.
- 27 S. Graham and S. Marvin, *Splintering Urbanism*. London: Routledge, 2001, p. 358. Also see K. Hannam, M. Sheller, and J. Urry, 'Mobilities, immobilities and moorings', *Mobilities*, 2006, vol. 1, no. 1, 1–22 for discussion of moorings as adjustment nodes.
- 28 P. Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, p. 40.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid. p. 33.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid. p. 42.
- 33 L. de Cauter, 'The capsule and the network: notes toward a general theory', in S. Graham (ed.) *The Cybercities Reader*. London: Routledge, 2004. p. 96.
- 34 Ibid. p. 95.
- 35 Z. Bauman, *Globalization: The Human Consequences*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998, p. 87.
- 36 Z. Bauman, *Life in Fragments: Essays in Postmodern Moralities*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 96.
- 37 On the question of mobility and citizenship see Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies*, p. 162.
- 38 T. Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 2010, vol. 28, no. 1, 22.
- 39 K. O'Reilly and M. Benson, 'Lifestyle migration: escaping to the good life?' in K. O'Reilly and M. Benson (eds.) *Lifestyle Migration: Expectations, Aspirations and Experiences*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009, pp. 1–13.
- 40 S. Castles, 'Towards a sociology of forced migration and social transformation', *Sociology*, 2003, vol. 37, no. 2, 15.
- 41 Papastergiadis, *Turbulence of Migration*, p. 1.
- 42 Castles, 'Towards a sociology of forced migration', p. 14.
- 43 Papastergiadis, *Turbulence of Migration*, p. 4.
- 44 Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', p. 21.
- 45 R. Booth, 'Afghan gang smuggled in compatriots to live and work in pizza takeaways', *The Guardian*, 6 June, 2009, 13.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 BBC News, 'Spain Vows to Curb Migrant Wave', 2007, online available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/5313560.stm#map> (accessed 10 January 2007). The routes used by smuggling gangs are constantly shifting due to increases in the policing of established routes.
- 48 On the historical precedents of this see T. Cresswell, *The Tramp in America*. London: Reaktion, 2001, p. 31.
- 49 On the 'politics of comfort' in terms of vehicular movement see P. Virilio, *Negative Horizon*. London: Continuum, 2006, pp. 54–5.
- 50 P. Kelso, 'Voyage of the damned', *The Guardian G2*, 20 December, 2001, p. 6.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Bauman, *Globalization*, p. 78.
- 53 Papastergiadis, *Turbulence of Migration*, pp. 1–2.
- 54 M. De Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*. New York: Zone Books, 1991.
- 55 See J. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 7–8; also see J. Lynch, 'Turbulent times: Bloody Sunday and the civil rights movement', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 2006, vol. 10, no. 3, 275–91.
- 56 Also see T. Czerwinski, *Coping with the Bounds: Speculations on Nonlinearity in Military Affairs*. Washington DC: National Defense University, 1998.

- 57 On the wider importance of relationality see for example C. Robert Mesle, *Process-Relational Philosophy: An Introduction to Alfred North Whitehead*. West Conshohocken: Templeton Press, 2008.
- 58 See I. Prigogine and I. Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*. London: Heinemann, 1984.
- 59 N. Thrift, 'The place of complexity', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 1999, vol. 16, no. 3, 33.
- 60 J. Urry, *Global Complexity*. Cambridge: Polity, 2003, p. 22.
- 61 S. Kwinter, *Architectures of Time: Toward a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002, p. 48.
- 62 M. Serres, *The Birth of Physics*. Manchester: Clinamen Press, 2000, p. 27.
- 63 Ibid. p. 28.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid. p. 29.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 I. Prigogine and I. Stengers, 'Postface: dynamics from Leibniz to Lucretius', in M. Serres, *Hermes: Literature, Science, Philosophy*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982, p. 153.
- 69 B. Anderson and J. Wylie, 'On geography and materiality', *Environment and Planning A*, 2009, vol. 41, no. 2, 321.
- 70 A. Chrisafis, 'Trapped in 'le jungle' – but still dreaming of El Dorado', *The Guardian*, 4 July, 2009, 12.
- 71 Jeffrey, 'Waiting'.
- 72 Ibid. p. 954.
- 73 G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- 74 Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 2.
- 75 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 96.
- 76 D. Gregory, 'The black flag: Guantánamo Bay and the space of exception', *Geografiska Annaler Series B*, 2006, vol. 88, no 4, 407.
- 77 Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 1.
- 78 H. van Houtum, O. Kramsch, and W. Zierhofer, 'Prologue: b/ordering space', in H. van Houtum, O. Kramsch, and W. Zierhofer (eds.) *B/ordering Space*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005, p. 2.
- 79 See J. Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- 80 P. Kenyon, 'African migrants seeking UK "Dream"', *BBC News*, 2009, online available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/8287428.stm> (accessed 10 November 2009).
- 81 Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 98.
- 82 Chrisafis, 'Trapped in 'le jungle'.
- 83 Ibid. p. 13.
- 84 For an excellent first-hand account of the smuggler networks operating at Sangatte see H. Courau, "'Tomorrow Inch Allah, chance!' People smuggler networks in Sangatte", *Immigrants and Minorities*, 2003, vol. 22, no. 2/3, 374–87.
- 85 Chrisafis, 'Trapped in 'le jungle', p. 12.
- 86 See Ibid.
- 87 Booth, 'Afghan gang smuggled in compatriots'.
- 88 Also see Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', p. 29.